



Captive Wild Animal Protection Coalition  
P.O. Box 6944  
San Carlos, CA 94070  
www.cwapc.org

## LOOSE TIGER IN FLORIDA IS TIP OF THE ICEBERG

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT: Kim K. Haddad, DVM  
Cell: 650-619-0628  
www.cwapc.org

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CWAPC warns that “Bobo’s” escape is the tip of the iceberg - the rate of animal escapes, human and animal injury and death from privately owned big cats is increasing.

This is the third incident for Steve Sipek, owner of the escaped tiger. CWAPC is asking Florida wildlife and USDA officials to revoke Sipek’s USDA permit. He must conform to current laws prohibiting private ownership of wild animals as pets and place his animals in facilities where they can be safely and properly cared for.

“This is yet another example of the need for stronger laws and better enforcement,” says Kim Haddad, DVM Manager of CWAPC. “These cats are Sipek’s personal pets. He clearly does not merit a USDA permit: he owns 6 dangerous wild predators as pets.”

According to Carole Lewis, President of The Association of Sanctuaries and Founder of Big Cat Rescue in Tampa, “Sipek does not meet the requirements for a sanctuary, and there’s no conservation value to what he does.”

Florida is considered one of the strictest states for exotic pet ownership, and yet Sipek is one of many flaunting the 1999 law prohibiting private ownership of wild animals.

Since April 2003, big cat incidents include 4 human fatalities, 18 human injuries, 124 animal fatalities, 28 animal escapes, and 222 confiscations.

According to Pat Derby, Founder and President of the Performing Animal Welfare Society, “This is a totally predictable situation. Just like John Weinhart in California— PAWS will be caring for 39 of his tigers— we will continue to see these trainers with backyard pets create a danger to the public and keep animals in conditions that are unsafe and acceptable.”

CWAPC represents 20 leading animal protection organizations, zoos and sanctuaries. CWAPC believes keeping wild animals as pets is dangerous for people and inhumane for animals.

### **Coalition Participants:**

Animal Protection Institute  
African Elephant Conservation Trust  
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals  
Born Free Foundation  
Detroit Zoological Institute  
Folsom Zoo/Sanctuary  
Fund for Animals  
Houston SPCA  
Humane Society of the United States

International Fund for Animal Welfare  
Kimya Institute  
Marin Humane Society  
Oakland Zoo  
Performing Animal Welfare Society  
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals  
The Association of Sanctuaries, Inc  
Skip Trimble  
The Science & Conservation Center  
The Summerlee Foundation